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Class of 1980 Fifteen Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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RESPONSES FROM THE MEMBERS OF
THE CLASS OF 1980
TO THE LAST QUESTION ON 15-YEAR SURVEY ASKING FOR
"COMMENTS OF ANY SORT ABOUT LIFE
OR LAW SCHOOL OR WHATEVER"

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I entered law school, nearly 10 years after I received my undergraduate degree, with little thought of what I would do, unsure even if I wanted to be a lawyer. I was captivated by the study of law and have never regretted the decisions I have made. I have had wonderful opportunities and thoroughly enjoy being a lawyer and working in-house corporate law departments. Michigan prepared me very well for this career; I appreciate the academic training and the excellent teaching.

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The militantly liberal political climate of the law school (especially the "official" political climate of parts of the faculty and administration and vocal student organizations) both while I was in A² and now (based upon the publications I receive and read) were/are (whether right or wrong or good or bad) vastly out of line with the political climate in the "outside" world to which one goes to work and live after life in the Quad. I do not intend to judge that climate as right or wrong or good or bad so much as I simply wish to indicate how out-of-touch the law school is with the realities of mainstream America. That insular climate detracts from the educational and developmental process offered by U. of M. (and certain other of the historically leading law schools) and causes most students to encounter certain difficulties in re-adjusting to the real social marketplace in which most of America lives and works.

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After searching for alternatives to the practice of law that would permit me more personal freedom and also provide a greater contribution to society, I have finally determined that it is possible to carve out a relatively comfortable niche within the profession. For me, in-house practice with a group of highly gifted professionals who place a high priority on their outside interests has been the answer. Unfortunately, this type of job seems to have disappeared from the private law firms and I am thankful that I escaped that world while I still had the chance.

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I had a great time in law school. Many friends that I met there are still my friends today. The intellectual challenge was outstanding and I'm very proud of the school.

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The training in logical analysis I received in law school has been invaluable even though I never entered the field.

I'd be interested in the answers to: 1. If you practice law —what is the most important reason you continue to do so? 2. If you do not practice law—what is the most important reason you no longer (or never) chose to do so?

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It would be advisable if law students were trained in common decency. In my opinion, technology (fax machines, etc.) have enabled the legal world to be controlled by those who did not study for exams until the night before the test. Unreasonable time demands have become standard operating procedure.

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You can be the best lawyer in the world, but in private practice, without clients, you are in a position of vulnerability. This thought needs to be instilled in law school.

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The University of Michigan Law School was the most hostile environment for women I had ever experienced. The hostility permeated the student body above all, and it exuded from the institution itself. I know our society has forever been racist; I come from a very conservative state. The sexism seemed far more concentrated in the context of the law school.

The entire model of what a lawyer does and who a lawyer is was based on what men lawyers do. That model was further perceived as the "right" way to be a lawyer. Perhaps no one had the imagination to consider how women do things differently. But there also were no role models around to compare. Clearly all the "real" faculty were men. All the "real" classes were in the business context of the law, dealing with aspects of the corporate world.

I came to law school with visions of doing good things; of practicing criminal defense; of seeking justice. Within the law school I routinely found these goals were ridiculed.

The entire institutional focus appeared to be getting a job with the "big firms," in the "right" cities, for the "big money." Even when I graduated, I was criticized by classmates for still having "an abstract notion of justice."

I spent three years practicing with a civil practice firm, making reasonably good money for the time. I was very dissatisfied there. There were no real issues of law; the only issues were of money.

I then turned to criminal defense. I have never looked back. After eight years as a public defender, I am now in solo practice. I am one of the prominent criminal defense lawyers in my state.

I also am one of the very few lawyers I know who is entirely happy in my current practice.

I am still paying the very last of my student loans. A few years ago, Dean Bollinger came through, and observed that it was not unusual for a law school graduate to leave school in debt for \$100,000 (including undergraduate school). This sort of financial burden makes it utterly impossible for anyone to obtain the education of Michigan and put it to use in public defense, legal services, "public interest," or any but the "big money" jobs in the business world.

The law school might do well to reevaluate its commitment to the public interest, at least enough to permit its students to pursue their own passions in these areas.

Clearly I developed skills in law school that have helped me greatly in my career. Nonetheless, the experience of being a woman at the University of Michigan Law School was very unpleasant. It did not have to be.

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Law School and the practice of law are two very different things.

Law School taught me about Law Schooling. Law School did NOT teach me about, or prepare me for, what the actual practice of law would be like. As a scholar, I liked Law School; but, to my great surprise, I did NOT like the actual practice of law at all. Being totally UN-familiar with what the actual practice of law would be like before entering Law School, the Law School should have given me some indication of what the actual practice of law would be like instead of keeping it a secret for me to discover later on my own.

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Civility and ethics have declined significantly in the practice of law in the last 15 years.

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I loved law school. It was the most stimulating time of my life up 'til then. I had never worked so hard or enjoyed myself so much.

The professors were a mixture--J.J. White was the most impressive person I'd studied from and is still a role model for me. Others also helped me grow enormously.

While I didn't even know Michigan had its own Court Rules when I got to my firm, I was able to pick them up quickly. I felt very able to discuss not only what the law was but how it should be with my partners who were doing cutting edge things. They surprised me by giving me more responsibility early than I'd been led to expect. I think this was due to their respect for my education and the critical thinking skills the law school had developed in me.

I enjoyed my fellow law students most of all. Even the arrogant ones were a special part of the experience. I recommend Michigan Law to anyone who is considering it and get back to Ann Arbor whenever I can.

When I last responded to a survey from the Law School, I was a middle/senior level associate at a large New York firm, and work had swallowed far too much of my life. Looking back at those times, I'm not sure how or why I endured for so long. Ten years or so later, as a partner in a medium-sized firm, my life is in better balance, which makes the demands of practicing law much more acceptable. Having said that, however, the biggest single struggle continues to be balancing work and family.

The question in the survey as to whether, knowing what I know today, I would choose to enter law practice again is difficult and complex. Like many lawyers, I suspect, there are things that I do that I enjoy a great deal, mixed with heaping helpings of dross. In a perfect world, of course, I would figure out how to do only the things I like and find partners and/or staff to do the tasks I don't care for. That strategy tends to be difficult to implement.

In addition, although better, the lifestyle is still arduous. While I cannot complain financially, the hours are still long and erratic. As has been widely and correctly reported, the competition for clients and the pressures on law firms continue to increase. If I suffered from a single misconception earlier in my career, it was that after becoming a partner, the demands on a young lawyer eased. They don't; they simply change and, if anything, they increase.

I work with many Wall Street professionals. Based on my experience, the hours and demands are quite comparable. When I compare the financial rewards, I feel shortchanged.

So although I am perfectly comfortable financially, I wonder whether the effort/reward ratio is justifiable. Thus, if I viewed my career solely from a financial perspective (and I do not), I would not choose law school again.

From the opposite end of the spectrum, I think about other business and career interests, and wonder what would have happened had I pursued them. While the grass may always appear greener in other pastures, I do know that most of my friends and acquaintances who have abandoned practicing law for other pursuits are generally happier and calmer. While one may write a splendid brief, conclude a brilliant negotiation, or close a fabulous deal, none of those activities is as creative as writing a new software program or building a growing your own (non-law firm) business.

I know that one of the reasons that I was drawn to law school was my knowledge that a successful law career guaranteed a satisfactory mixture of professional, social and financial rewards. But implicit in that calculus is a measure of risk aversion. I have changed in the last 15 years in that my risk tolerance is now far greater, in part because my career has changed and offered me options and alternatives that I could never have predicted at the end of law school. Thus, because I am less risk averse overall, I am therefore much less certain that I would choose law school from among the alternative careers that I considered at the end of undergraduate school.

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National law schools (like U of M) should devote more attention to training their students in the technical and practical aspects of law practice and lawyering.

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I am a happy lawyer. The work is challenging, and I enjoy helping (or trying to help) clients. Even though my practice is a business/commercial practice, my clients become very personally involved in their matters, and look to me for help as a counselor. I find that aspect of practice to be the most gratifying. The only regret I have is that I don't think my work affects society in a significant way, except for the minor ripple effect if I do good work/good deeds for clients, and help them through frustrating times.

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The lack of preparation in law school for the practice of law (research, trial work, litigation, etc.) had a severe

effect on my career and life. It is something that I hold the law school (and perhaps all law schools) responsible for.

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Law schools are enrolling too many lawyers. So-called tort reform fueled and directed by doctors, insurance companies, greedy corporations and Republicans has taken away too many rights of people without means. Lawyers are now at each other's throats because of the intense competition for business. The lawyers with the most money are the greediest. Clients of little means suffer as a result.

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I have felt and still do that Law School is unnecessarily detached from the actual practice of law. I went to law school with little or no actual life experience in the law or otherwise. My classroom experience left me feeling that the practice of law was insurmountably difficult and academic.

I was not taught that many areas of practice are simple, repetitive and dull. I did not learn, nor was I taught, that the practice of law makes many, if not more, demands on non-academic skills. It would have been enormously useful for me to have an informal talk with ordinary practicing lawyers. Doubtless, many of my classmates grew up in families with lawyers or had other contact with the profession that I did not.

Looking back, law school was a very poor place to learn much about what the practice of law is like. When I was there, the school seemed to be insulated from reality. In fact, I got the impression the school was contemptuous of ordinary lawyers. It would have helped me if the professors had showed more respect for ordinary practitioners and the school had made some effort to connect to them.

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I have generally mellowed in my feelings about law school in the past ten years. I found law school to be a rather unfriendly, unhappy place, but private law practice is so brutal that the law school experience pales in comparison. I have reached a place in the legal profession after about 15 years of practice where I have control over my time, my work, and my life in general, as long as I generate enough business and income for my firm to keep my partners happy. My family life is happy. The income is good. Most days at work are rather pleasant. Now if only the clients weren't

such a pain to deal with, this law business would be great. There is definitely pressure to attract and generate business and to collect the fees (which can be the most difficult part) and it always seems that if only I could manage just a little bit more of all of that, everything would be easier. It's like running on a treadmill all the time, but the treadmill does seem to be slowing down and allowing me to make a little more progress in terms of fee generation. I have found a source of intellectual energy in volunteer teaching at a local law school, which has given me a welcome change of pace. I really like the ability to delve deeply into an area and to interact with younger people at the law school. I find that it is much more enjoyable writing and grading exams than it ever was taking them.

I was surprised to find in my teaching at the local law school, which is definitely not in the "upper echelon" of nationwide schools, that the school placed a strong emphasis on training its students in trial and appellate advocacy. Its programs are more extensive than Michigan's were in this area when I was at Michigan, and the students see these programs as a fundamental part of the law school. Michigan would benefit from adopting this type of attitude and by expanding its programs to include many more students in trial and appellate advocacy on a more formal basis.

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I found my law school experience to be the most exciting, enriching part of my life from both an intellectual and social point-of-view. I enjoyed my classmates, professors, and the overall campus experience. Candidly, I've never been happier nor have I ever felt more successful.

In terms of law practice, I have been very fortunate. The practice has changed dramatically since I began. When I started, my goal was simply to be a great, technical lawyer. I was taught that this alone, combined with a high level of integrity, would be the key to professional and financial success. Instead, as our world changed, I have seen much less reward for skill, judgment and integrity and more for business development, which is extremely difficult in our competitive environment. Unlike younger attorneys only a few years behind me, I've been lucky to have the opportunity to succeed in that area. But the pressure to develop and maintain business, in an increasingly "uncivil" environment, really detracts from the joys of practice.

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I have become increasingly disillusioned with the large firm practice of law. Taking pride in practicing well with partners you respect is increasingly overshadowed by a system (at least here) that rewards and encourages the billing of an extraordinary number of hours. The maintenance of long term institutional relationships (that are quite profitable, by and large) is viewed with far less respect than the "entrepreneurial" gathering and courting of new clients, whether they ever produce a dollar. The act of "business development" has become a goal in and of itself. Collegiality is dead, kids.

It has taken me 15 years, but I have finally reconciled this practice with a happy family life and have begun to practice on my own terms. I will continue to be a productive, contributing partner, but I will do it on my own terms (without the self-aggrandizement necessary to reap financial rewards).

If I could do it over again, I might have chosen a very different path.

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If I had known what pursuing a legal career would do to my chances of having a family life and if I had been aware of other careers, I would not have chosen law school.

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Michigan is a wonderful school. I am grateful to be a graduate, and proud of the education I received there. A sad note was how lonely I felt while there. It was far from home, and although the Law School tried to set up a community, I felt isolated. I am proud to say that my minority status has not gone untapped. I espouse the rights and advocate for Native Americans, both within the federal government, and on an international level. I will be presenting an environmental restoration strategy for northeastern indigenous Nations at the United Nations this summer.

Thank you for your confidence in my abilities. I have always been grateful that Michigan took a chance on me and provided scholarships: Please keep up your minority programs--we still have a loooooong way to go until all humans are equal!

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Simply having attended the University of Michigan Law School has opened doors for me. That credential is widely

recognized by both firms and clients, enhancing my reputation in the legal community, my mobility as I changed firms, and my competence.

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To repeat a common phrase seen on blackboards at the Law School while I was there: "Scotty, Beam me outta here!"

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I can point to very few specifics from law school that stuck with me or seem important now, but generally, I feel (and have always felt) well-prepared for the challenges of my practice.

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The life of a law teacher is a great one. I do worry about the sort of life I am training many of my students for, especially those in large-firm, large-town practice.

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I learned how to think like a lawyer.

I did not like or enjoy other law students generally, but thought many of the professors were excellent.

I most enjoyed the opportunity to get to know my classmates who were racial or ethnic minorities, some of the most interesting and exceptional people I have met.

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The practical aspects of law are missing...the How to...maybe a mandatory clinic with lectures from court clerks--and sit-in visits to a courtroom with written commentary required. Maybe a stronger ethics program, more war stories. Quit hiding the ball--I don't think I ever found it. More emphasis on responsibility to improve society and lot of mankind...

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I left private practice in 1993 to work [in a managing attorney position in a government agency] I feel that my current job is what I was meant to be. I also feel that I have finally become what I intended to be when I entered law school.

I enjoyed private practice and I may consider returning to it some day, but I find my current work much more rewarding. It is never too late to make a career change.

I think that law school does not prepare students for life on the outside very well. The law school should focus on enhancing writing skills. I do feel that my legal analysis is sound because of the training I received in law school, but legal analysis will not win cases unless it can be expressed verbally and in writing. I had to work hard after law school to learn how to write persuasively.

I also believe we should be realistic with lawyers entering private law firms. They will be expected to market effectively. If they do not generate business they will not survive in most law firm environments regardless of their skills as an attorney. I personally enjoyed marketing, but I would not recommend private practice to someone who does not.

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I have changed careers and probably would not go to law school if I could do it all over again, but law school education and experience has helped me in my new career.

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I went to law school a product of the 60's and Watergate but with some real-life-work experience. I was, and I think most of my classmates were, a bit romantic about becoming professionals even if not as politically committed to public service as some of us professed to be. New law school graduates who join or interview at my firm today, and whom I encounter when judging law school mock-trials and mock-appellate arguments, strike me as far more polished and businesslike than I recall my fellow law students being. They seem utterly unfazed by the staggering demands that are placed today on the time and energy of anyone hoping to earn \$50,000 a year or more in this business--and it is no longer becoming a business; it is one and everybody knows it, including clients. I can't imagine being a law student today and contemplating having essentially no life (as I view having a life) outside the church of the billable hour unless I can "get" enough big clients by playing golf to play even more golf.

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I believe U.M. Law was great for those individuals who had a "calling" to the legal profession. However, for those of us who were a bit confused about what we wanted to do in life, the Law School was probably not the best way to spend three years.

I've become disillusioned with law and lawyers. This is due to the ambulance-chasers, as well as the eager

acceptance by some attorneys to file suit, regardless of the merits of the case. The chase for dollars, and the attorney's ability to get 30%, have led to a decline in social values and the acceptance of personal responsibility. I'd like to think U.M. alumnae are above this, but I fear they contribute to this situation in more subtle, "back-room" ways.

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Law school was an excellent training for "whatever comes." Law practice was a complete bore. I left early, succeeded in finance, and now enjoy a great life. I would recommend UMLS enthusiastically to anyone of intelligence-- particularly those not determined to be lawyers forever.

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For the most part, I enjoyed Law School and feel it was a good foundation for law practice as an attorney. However, it is merely a "foundation." Most of the skills needed to "practice law" successfully are developed at a law firm, not in law school. It is critical to keep pushing yourself to continue the learning process every day to develop the necessary skills to successfully "practice law."

I also feel Law School would have been more enjoyable if there had been less emphasis on the Socratic method, more on the professors actually "teaching" what the law was, what the issues were, where the various distinctions existed. There is too much focus on avoiding embarrassment in class, not enough on learning.

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I enjoy the practice of law and find it very stimulating and challenging, now that my practice is a transactional and counseling practice. I started my career as a litigator and hated it. I would not still be practicing if I had to be a litigator.

The one thing I do not like about practicing in a private firm is the necessity of continuing to sell yourself and bring in business, especially when so many things are out of your control--mergers, acquisitions, etc. It would be nice to be able to concentrate just on the work alone but that doesn't seem possible.

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I am very satisfied with the practice of law.

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As a recruiter and employee--I beg you to institute administrative law as a required course.

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Having a U of M law degree is a great asset even though I am not "practicing."

Fifteen years ago, I would never have been able to predict that my life and work would be what they are now. There are many stressors in combining full time work with two children under age 3, but there are rewards as well. Occasionally you even get excited about what you are doing!

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The law school prepared me very well for my career. I appreciate the intellectual challenge and mind-broadening experience the law school offered. I think you should resist pressures to teach more of the nuts and bolts of law practice; there is plenty of time to learn that later, in actual practice.

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I went to law school because I wanted to do good and help the less fortunate. Very little of that is involved in my job. Mainly I earn money to pay the bills, like most everyone else does. The job is OK for that and I mostly enjoy it, but I wish there was more of a feeling that I was helping other people.

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I wish the school had forced me to have or had directly confronted me with the opportunity to receive career counseling. I didn't even think about my future until I graduated. I thought summer clerkships were just for the wealth/status obsessed, big firm/big city-bound students. I wish someone had counseled me on how my choices on leaving school could affect the length of my professional life.

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The bottom line often is that in two years, what I did today in my office will make no difference to anyone. This is probably true of many jobs, but was not my expectation of a professional career. The most fulfilling thing I ever did was representing my first pro bono client, a battered woman, who to this day calls me and sends me cards and genuinely

appreciates what I did for her and her children, knows it made a difference, and it was in an area I knew nothing about (divorce/domestic relations).

The teaching at the law school was very good—I gained as much insight into the system as I could have without being in it.

My social life at the school from the Law Quad to the house and people I lived with the rest of the years there were exceptional.

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The most frustrating aspect of practicing law is the seemingly higher and higher level of discourtesy exhibited by opposing counsel, courts and others. Lawyers seem to feel they must win at all costs, irrespective of their role as officers of the court. Clients are frustrated by the high cost of legal services and take that out on their lawyers. Moreover, as a woman I definitely feel there is a glass ceiling in the opportunities made available to me even by members of my own firm. More often than not, the men are pinpointed for marketing opportunities and for the high profile lawsuits,

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The law school should consider some method for counseling its students on the "delivery of legal services." I see this course/clinic/mini-seminar as providing practical insight into the following issues:

- role as a lawyer in a single-client setting (e.g. corporation/government agency)
- providing legal services in a policy-dominated setting (e.g. Federal agency—like State Department; public interest institutions)
- expectations and challenges in satisfying in-house corporate counsel who are clients
- institutional/business influences on providing legal services (e.g. establishing/working to budgets, staffing, how to manage issues/cases/people)
- delivering pro bono services—responsibilities, challenges, maximizing benefits
- spotting and handling conflicts when delivering services
- delivering legal services in a judicial clerkship role.

The objective would be twofold—(1) to better inform students on their career choices, and (2) to better prepare

students for the practical challenges of practicing law. I believe some insight and training would make U of M unique in this regard, and provide the type of awareness to graduates that (unfortunately) tends to be available only after years of trial and error.

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Have you noticed how lawyer-bashing has been latched onto by the entertainment industry as a safe harbor for outsider jokes and villainizing (a safe substitute for ethnic jokes and stereotypes). I enjoy a good joke, too, and have repeated my share--but I find objectionable the "jokes" involving nothing more than unreasoned hatred or hostility toward lawyers (you know, the kind where the joke essentially is however many lawyers have been killed, it's not enough-ha ha-or we hate lawyers so much-guffaw, snort).

When is the last time you bought a Miller Lite. Please explain the commercial about lawyer roping (a beer company and its advertising agency feel morally superior to the legal profession?!?). (Miller Lite's new ads seem to target the same kind of customer-"Less intelligent"/"More hostile"-e.g., the one that was being played through the NBA playoffs: "We drink Miller beer, we hate sportscasters, we're stupid and sexist, we don't believe in sportsmanship or fair play, we hate umpires when they rule against our team, wouldn't it be cool if we could harass umpires at home!")

What about the movie Jurassic Park (biggest box office gross ever) where Spielberg exploits lawyer bashing for his trademark "humor" to counterpoint the suspense--the creator of Jurassic Park is treated sympathetically while the lawyer (who insists on an expert inspection and evaluation of the Park's safety before it is opened to the public) is portrayed as the villain--lawyers are literally called "blood-suckers," and there is other clever dialogue like: Businessman: "Don't you hate lawyers." Scientists: "Uh...we don't know any lawyers." The audience is aroused to literally cheer and laugh when the lawyer gets chomped (a high point of the film and a Hollywood "classic" scene for the ages). My experience suggests that lawyers probably are more likely to remain poised and responsible in stressful circumstances--but surely, as a class lawyers are no more cowardly than your average Joe, or inclined to abandon little children and lose control of their sphincter. (My guess is that Spielberg made Schindler's List because of guilt over Jurassic Park.)

One more example, another box-office blockbuster Pretty Woman (watch it again if you can tolerate it--in this Hollywood world view the only "decent" women are prostitutes, and women who will not perform sex for money

are worthy of contempt and ridicule). Also contemptible are corporate raiders like Richard Gere--except he is the prodigal son, he is a raider but he is troubled about it--he wants to do good and give up that evil business, but wouldn't you know, his lawyer (Jason Alexander) won't let him. Of all the contemptible people in respectable society, the lawyer is the pinnacle of evil, manipulating well-meaning clients into amassing ill-gotten fortunes. But that subtext is too subtle for the film-makers' tastes. They have to go further and have Jason Alexander, the lawyer, attempt to rape his client's mistress. Even if you feel that people who practice corporate law are worthy of scorn--is it really plausible and fair to portray them as rapists. (Why, corporate lawyers are the most asexual group I know.)

Beware: When the lie gets repeated enough, people will believe.

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I like the work that I do. However, it would be nice to work fewer hours. I do not feel that other firms would be better and the particular type of work would probably not be as interesting to me as what I do now.

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Someone reviewing the answers I have given in the questionnaire would come to the conclusion that I am extremely confused: claiming a high degree of satisfaction with my family life and my current job, but indicating that I would not choose to go to law school if given my life to live over again and not expecting to be a practicing lawyer five years from now. And yet those two propositions are not inconsistent. Being a lawyer has been a source of great personal growth and I have, after five prior attempts, found a job that is almost perfectly suited to my abilities and needs. But I must continually grapple with my inability to feel that I have contributed anything of particular worth to society, that I have done anything more than just hold down a job for the past fifteen years. Sure, I have done it well and to the great satisfaction of my clients, but I am left with the feeling that a person with my abilities could have used them a bit more productively than for cranking out another set of loan documents. And I find that I continue to hate telling people at parties what I do for a living.

For that reason I made the decision about 18 months ago that I would probably leave the practice of law by the time that I am 45 years old. I am still unsure of where I will go from there, but my current bent is toward teaching--probably science at the elementary or junior high school level. Some experiences I have had recently getting some

Brownie Girl Scouts my daughter's age excited about chemistry and physics have generated a whole lot more gratification for me than the past several years of law practice. I have not completely ruled out the possibility that I would continue to practice law for a charitable or other not-for-profit organization, but the disrespect to which lawyers are subject continues to be a factor against staying in the legal field.

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One can live greatly in the law, but at the conclusion of 15 years of private practice I am increasingly dissatisfied to realize that I do not and that most of my contemporaries do not seem to. This is especially the case with those in transactional practices. Having practiced almost exclusively in this capacity, I have become convinced that lawyers should litigate both because it is the one service which they uniquely offer to clients and because it is the one arena in which they most closely act as principals. I believe that the experience which we had as law students at Michigan was excellent as it related to interactions between lawyers with respect to the law, but did not extend in any serious manner to preparing us to interact with clients. The lawyer whose practice is devoted to financing transactions is very different in this respect from the lawyer who litigates or who counsels individuals or corporations. We did not adequately appreciate this and I don't believe you can without some hands-on experience. I would propose a requirement that each semester or year would involve students with interactions with actual or role-playing clients in distinct contexts. I would not use law students as proxy clients, but would try to develop the program in conjunction with the other Michigan programs.

As to life, too many of us put it off too long while acting as agents for others. The advent of technology which makes commonly available access to information and to documentation production previously acting as barriers to entry has, and will continue to, undermine the value of this agency to our clients; the sharp reduction in the public esteem for lawyers and other professionals is one of the striking developments of the past 15 years and, in my view, results from their identification as gatekeepers extracting tolls for access to information rather than as technicians skilled in using the information. As the information becomes designed to be easier to use this may become unavoidable.

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On the whole, I think it would have been more satisfying—personally and intellectually and from a family life stand point—to be an engineer.

The lawyers I deal with as a whole are distrustful, not particularly insightful, and religious in their worship of the billable hour.

I would not do law again.

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I wish I had pursued a joint MBA/JD degree while at Michigan... Given the chance again, I would seriously consider government work or a judicial clerkship for a short period following law school.

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The legal profession needs to recognize and acknowledge that women lawyers with young children have family obligations. Part time work/flexible schedules should be made available with no stigma attached. The Fortune 500 companies still have a very long way to go to effectively deal with this situation. The corporation I currently work for is a true dinosaur in this regard.

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I really did not like the way law was taught at Michigan. The substance and caliber of the teachers was fine, but the assumption that we were all arrogant and needed to be knocked down so we could be raised up to "think like a lawyer" did not work for me. I started humble; I ended by working hard to be invisible.

I also did not like Michigan's version of the Socratic method. I would have benefitted much more if an outline or overview of a topic was presented first, so that I had a framework for the bits I learned through the rest of the course. I liken my experience to being asked to put together a jigsaw puzzle and being handed pieces one at a time, but having no idea what the eventual picture is supposed to be.

I had always liked school. I dreaded law classes. I have no idea why it had to be so inhumane.

I did learn quite a lot that has been valuable to me in my career, but very little of it was the official subject matter of the classes.

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I greatly enjoyed the intellectual aspects of Law School—in fact I believe the subject matter of many classes should be

required of all secondary school students, but law as a career is grossly unfulfilling, lacks any intellectual challenge and requires one to work with debt-driven, less than ethical persons, scrapping for a buck. I have returned to school at night and have found much pleasure and intellectual stimulation from Math and Science courses.

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I thought long and hard about becoming a lawyer. In college and graduate school the students bound for law school, or already there, were quite an elitist bunch. Rarely did they stoop to converse with non-law students. Somehow, that just wasn't me. Would going to law school and becoming a lawyer really change me that much? Would I actually have to go through more than one marriage to finally meet that person who would be able to get along with whatever person I would become? Would I turn into a chain smoker, or an alcoholic?

I decided to take a Masters degree, and then to work for two years before I decided I was comfortable enough with myself to take the plunge. Michigan, of course, is a great place from which to graduate, and I've never regretted the choice. I still don't smoke or drink, I believe I am basically the same person, and I've been married to the same wonderful person since we tied the knot the week after 1st year finals.

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It may be a cliché, but the practice of law has changed from a profession to a business, to the detriment of ourselves and the public. I wish I had known this before I went to law school.

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1. I chose to become a lawyer in large part because of a summer in college during which I worked as a secretary/paralegal for a small civil rights/civil liberties law firm, as well as a year after college working as a paralegal for another small civil rights/civil liberties law firm. I never thought about the income potential of the law, only about the public service aspects of the law.

2 In retrospect, I was seeing the tail end of an era of substantial, significant litigation involving employment discrimination and other civil rights/civil liberties issues (such as illegal governmental wiretaps). I have noticed during my tenure on the Board of Directors of a local affiliate of the Connecticut Civil Liberties Union, for example, that it is now difficult to find blatant cases of

civil rights/civil liberties abuse. The pressing social issues now are primarily economic (de facto public school and other segregation, for instance, as opposed to de jure segregation), and perhaps incapable of solution through the legal system, substantially weakening one of my primary reasons for entering law school.

3. I think students contemplating become lawyers and contemplating applying to law schools need to be told the following:

a. The income potential of the profession has peaked, and is now in decline. The hours are long. The profession is no longer as highly respected by society as in the past. There are numerous other occupations that would be more lucrative, would provide more free time, and would engender fewer critical jokes at cocktail parties.

b. Income will be a direct function of hours worked and collected billings generated, in most legal practice settings (excluding academia and perhaps also public service), regardless of whether clients have negotiated "flat fees" for projects or are paying by the hour. To maximize income and minimize the need for long hours, the lawyer has to be able to re-market work product to multiple clients. This is usually extremely difficult, since no two lawsuits are alike, and (as a general rule) no two contracts or public offering memoranda are alike. Moreover, even with work product that can be re-marketed to multiple clients, the work becomes very routine and therefore less interesting.

c. As the legal market tightens up, partnership tracks lengthen, number of positions to be filled decreases, etc., the "squeeze" will adversely impact newcomers to the profession more severely than those with greater seniority. I believe the "squeeze" impacts women and minorities more severely as a result. Moreover, in an adverse economy, clients become more risk-averse and may perceive use of "non-traditional" legal counsel (such as women and minorities, as well as relatively inexperienced lawyers) as increasing risk. This makes "rainmaking" by all newcomers to the profession increasingly difficult.

d. Law school does not pretend to prepare individuals to practice law. That is, graduation from law school (and passing the bar exam) does not result in an individual immediately capable of practicing law. Instead, the next 3 years of employment need to be regarded as an apprenticeship or "residency" training period, because the law school curriculum does not (and cannot) include all of the substantive areas of law needed to actually "practice"

law. Law school provides training in legal research and legal analysis. It does not teach, for example, how to draft a loan agreement, a partnership agreement, a private placement offering memorandum or a divorce settlement agreement. This is in contrast to other professional/graduate schools (such as engineering, architecture, public health) where graduates can immediately go into the workplace and begin to apply substantive skills learned in school, and places the time and expense of a law school education into better context.

e. Most lawyers do not choose their area of specialization. Rather, they fall into an area of specialization randomly (usually due to the employer's immediate need to have a certain "slot" filled by the earliest available new hire). This is again in contrast to other professional/graduate schools, where students typically have more control over their ultimate area of specialization. (In medicine, for instance, students choose an area of specialization and then complete a residency in that area of specialization.)

I have found that if people thinking about becoming lawyers and thinking about going to law school were more cognizant of these issues, they would enter the profession with fewer misconceptions and run less risk of disappointment.

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This "profession" should have the same warning at its threshold that Dante envisioned over hell: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here."

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Law school was an intellectually stimulating three years but was only marginally useful as preparation for practicing law. It was useful in that it taught (or reinforced) an ability to work long hours, and required some precision in the use of language. The socratic method is inefficient as a means of conveying information, but I concede, somewhat reluctantly, that it teaches self-confidence in speaking and thinking in front of an audience. In all other respects law school falls short as preparation for practicing law, and three years studying history or literature might well be better.

Other than a base level of intellectual ability which nearly any student who is admitted to Michigan will possess, I believe that the most important skills in practicing are the ability to deal effectively with people, and judgment.

Law school's impact upon the first is probably negative, and it teaches judgment tangentially, if at all.

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I can't believe that the guy who sat three seats away from me in Jerry Israel's criminal law class is the dean of the law school! He was very smart, but wasn't my idea then of a law school dean! I guess the school is in great hands, because I taught Jeff how to get very good grades. I look forward to returning for the 15th reunion.

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Why did you not ask question regarding gender and racial discrimination, of those alums who have left the profession? It played a major part in my decision to get out, and that question would probably have provided the most enlightening information on the form. Obviously, your results are skewed if you only keep data on those people who have not been so discriminated against as to sour them on the profession.

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I do not believe that the practice of law is very different from many other occupations and, in general, the failure of our occupations to meet certain expectations is a function of the failure of society to meet many of our expectations. Simply put, notwithstanding certain esoteric economic analyses that I have read recently, (a) most of our generation will not achieve as much security or lifestyle gratification as our parents did, (b) we will find that the "promise" of job security has not been met and (c) we will see our children growing into adulthood in a fragmented and dangerous society.

The practice of law, whether in or outside a law firm, is so time-consuming and so incremental in nature that most lawyers cannot effectively evaluate goals and objectives beyond the next annual review, the next deal or the next incremental level of rainmaking. Because of this, many attorneys find themselves having passed up opportunities that, if they had understood them better, they would have considered more seriously.

The practice of law in this overall setting has become a much harder job, with lower prospects of success, than it was at the time that our class entered law school. Because of this, career counseling is a critical element of future law school curricula. Law students rarely understand the legal service industry or business of practicing law. Therefore, when students at schools such as the University of Michigan are inundated with interviewers from private law

firms, they begin to perceive that the private practice of law is the most desirable alternative. It is critical that law schools educate their students about what the results are likely to be 10 and 15 and 20 years down the road for someone who pursues a career in different venues (i.e., law firm, in-house practice, government, etc.).

The most vital role that law schools can play in avoiding career planning failure is to educate law students regarding all attributes of various types of positions years down the road (i.e., time demands; sophistication of work; allocation of responsibilities among legal, business and administrative roles; job security; and salary and non-salary compensation and benefits). I strongly encourage the Law School to institute a comprehensive program in this area, not just in the form of a class, but in the form of ongoing series of seminars, guest speakers and other access to various types of practitioners at various stages of their careers.

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I think the practice of law is hard on women. It is telling that most of the women lawyers I know who are my age either have moved into less traditional legal work or have bailed out altogether.

A lot of us found it difficult to balance families with a law job. Law offices, whether private or governmental, are not exactly "family friendly" work environments. I do not think, however, that the difficulties women lawyers my age have experienced stem primarily from the conflicts that arise with child rearing.

Most of the women I know from law school had difficulties in their first jobs. I know I was idealistic and naive about office politics, how I would be treated, and the standards by which I would be judged. I was surprised at the business nature of the practice of law, surprised by the low ethical standards, and surprised at how hard it was for a woman to be valued. I hope that it is easier for young women lawyers today.

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1) I was extremely disappointed and frustrated with the grading system in law school. Class participation accounted for none of the final grade. Grading on exams was haphazard and subjective. Grades appeared to be more influenced by brown nosing certain professors than by the nature of test responses.

2) Precedent was taught as if it was the cornerstone of Anglo-American jurisprudence when in actuality, judicial decisions are the product of the socio-economic and

political belief of the judiciary and certainly not of precedent. See for example ROE v. WADE.

3) The entire business side of legal practice is ignored by the school's curriculum. A lawyer must be prepared to operate a business, as well as to practice law. He or she must be able to work with others, deal with IRAs and 401-Ks and advertising and clients and courts, etc., etc.

4) Justice must be taught as the ends of the law. Too often I come up against defense counsel who will do anything (illegal, unethical, immoral, unconscionable) to gain an advantage in a case. This is particularly true of certain Detroit area defense firms. That truth and justice and not the obfuscation of the former and the defeat of the latter, are the sole legitimate ends of the law, must be pounded into students' heads and hearts.

5) We need more of professors who push their students to achieve a higher and deeper appreciation for the law (e.g. Bollinger, Vining, Kamisar).

6) More emphasis on clinical law courses—as requirements, not electives!

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I didn't "stumble" into law. I chose it after having been out of college for 10 years. I am the first person in my family to go to college and to go to law school. This represents a significant achievement for me. I was very pleased to have gone to Michigan and to have been a summer starter. The best thing about law school at Michigan was being exposed to faculty (and students) who emphasized clear legal thinking and who really showed me how to analyze a problem.

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